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9/2/71

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: LOWER HOUSE ELECTION: FURTHER COMMENTS

REF: A. SAIGON 13965
B. SAIGON 13847
C. SAIGON 13966
D. SAIGON 13891

1. SUMMARY: FURTHER ANALYSIS OF THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTION RESULTS SHOWS THAT THE WINNERS COMPRISE 84 PRO-GOVERNMENT DEPUTIES, 60 OPPOSITION AND 15 INDEPENDENT OR UNKNOWN. AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE ELECTION WAS THE INCREASED REPRESENTATION OF THE OPPOSITION AN QUANG BUDDHISTS (FROM ABOUT 15 TO ABOUT 25,) PARALLELING THEIR SUCCESS IN THE SENATE ELECTION LAST YEAR, WHICH GIVES THIS LEADING OPPOSITION GROUP SOME INCREASED STAKE IN REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. CATHOLIC PARTIES DID POORLY, AS DID MOST OTHER PARTIES CLOSE TO THE ADMINISTRATION. NORTHERN REFUGEES AND CENTRAL VIETNAMESE WILL PREDOMINATE IN THE NEW HOUSE OVER THE LESS AGGRESSIVE SOUTHERNERS. ONLY 41 OF 199 INCUMBENTS WHO RUN WERE ELECTED, OF WHOM ONLY 20 WERE

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PRO-GOVERNMENT, AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL NEED TO FIFWGVCW# LEADER-
SHIP TO HEAD ITS MAJORITY. THERE IS EVIDENCE OF BLATANT IRREGULARITIES IN A NUMBER OF PROVINCES, AND THERE WILL BE COMPLAINTS AND COURT CONSIDERATION IN THESE CASES.

2. THE GENERAL PUBLIC WAS PROBABLY NOT VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE ELECTION, AND THE GOOD TURNOUT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED A REFLECTION OF SUCCESSFUL OFFICIAL EFFORTS TO PERSUADE CITIZENS TO VOTE PLUS SOME DEGREE OF VOTER IDENTIFICATION WITH CANDIDATES SEEKING TO REPRESENT DEFINED LOCAL CONSTITUENCIES (IN CONTRAST TO BEING ELECTED AT-LARGE AS ARE SENATORS). THE GREAT TURNOVER IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE LOWER HOUSE MAY ENCOURAGE THE NEW DEPUTIES TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO DUTY THAN THEIR PRECECESSORS. THE ELECTION PRODUCED NO SHARP SURPRISES AND THE RESULTS ROUGHLY CONFORM WITH THE GENERALLY ACCEPTED POLITICAL COMPOSITION OF THE ELECTORATE. ALTHOUGH THE OPPOSITION MADE INROADS ON THIEU'S RATHER NARROW BASE OF POPULAR SUPPORT, THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD HAVE A WORKING MAJORITY IN THE NEW LOWER HOUSE. THE ELECTION DID NOT BRING ANY NEW ELEMENTS INTO THE POLITICAL SCENE, SUCH AS BOYCOTTS OR DISORDERS, WHICH MIGHT HAVE LED PRESIDENT THIEU TO MODIFY HIS PLANS FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THE ELECTIONS SHOW AN INCREASING DEGREE OF DEMOCRATIC ACTIVITY IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND GRADUAL EMERGENCE OF STRONGER POLITICAL PARTIES, BUT THESE TRENDS COULD BE REVERSED BY ADVERSE DEVELOPMENTS. END SUMMARY

3. AS FURTHER INFORMATION HAS BECOME AVAILABLE, THE POLITICAL BREAKDOWN OF THE NEW LOWER HOUSE SEEMS TO BE 84 PRO-GOVERNMENT DEPUTIES, 60 IN THE OPPOSITION, AND 15 UNKNOWN OR INDEPENDENT. (OUR PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS WAS IN REF A.) AT LEAST 19 OF THE OPPOSITION GROUP BELONG TO THE MODERATE PROGRESSIVE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT (PNM) WHICH COULD JOIN THE GOVERNMENT FORCES IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT ON THE OTHER HAND SOME ELEMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY ALSO ARE NOT ENTIRELY SOLID. (WE SHOULD NOTE THIS ANALYSIS IS BASED UPON PRELIMINARY RESULTS, WHICH COULD CHANGE IN A FEW CASES WHEN FINAL RESULTS ARE ANNOUNCED.)

4. WE HAVE NOW IDENTIFIED 25 AN QUANG DEPUTIES (COUNTING

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SENATOR TRAN VAN DON, WHOSE OPPORTUNISM MAKES HIM DIFFICULT TO CALSSIFY), 19 PNM (THEY ARE CLAIMING 22), 14 WORKER-FARMER PARTY (THEY ARE CLAIMING 17, INCLUDING SOME WHOSE MAJOR ALLEGIANCE IS ELSEWHERE (SEE SAIGON A-145)), 9 TUONG FACTION HOA HAO, 5. REVOLUTIONARY DAI VIET, AND FOUR EACH FOR THE NHAN XA AND MOVEMENT FOR THE RENAISSANCE OF THE SOUTH. THE ADVANCE OF AN QUANG (WHICH DID NOT TAKE AN ACTIVE PART IN THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTION IN 1967) FROM ABOUT 15 SUPPORTERS TO 25 (THEY ARE CLAIMING CLOSE TO 30) IS ONE OF THE MOST NOTEWORTHY DEVELOPMENTS OF THE ELECTION. SINCE THE AN QUANG LIST CAME IN FIRST IN THE SENATE ELECTION LAST YEAR, GIVING THEM 10 SEATS IN THAT 60-MAN BODY, THEY NOW HAVE ABOUT 16 PERCENT OF THE SENATE MEMBERSHIP AND 17 PERCENT OF THE LOWER HOUSE. THUS THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTION CONTRIBUTES TO THE TREND OF SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL ACTIVITY SET BY AN QUANG LAST YEAR. THE ELECTORAL SUCCESS OF THE BUDDHISTS PROBABLY REFLECTS FAIRLY ACCURATELY THEIR STRENGTH IN THE GENERAL POPULATION, WHICH IS LARGELY IN MR I AND IN COASTAL MR II. ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE FARMERS IN MRS III AND IV WOULD CALL THEMSELVES BUDDHISTS, MANY ARE REALLY ANCESTOR-WORSHIPPERS NOT UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE LOCAL PAGODAS. AN QUANG HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING TO ORGANIZE IN THE SOUTH, AND MOST OF THE BONZES ARE SYMPATHETIC, BUT THEIR POPULAR

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SUPPORT IS STILL LIMITED.

5. THE CATHOLICS, ON THE OTHER HAND, CONTINUED TO EVIDENCE THE FRAGMENTATION THEY HAVE SHOWN IN RECENT YEARS BY FAILING TO COALESCE BEHIND CERTAIN CANDIDATES. SO FAR WE HAVE ONLY BEEN ABLE TO CONFIRM FOUR NEW SEPUTIES FOR THE NHAN XA AND TWO FOR THE GREATER SOLIDARITY FORCE, WITH CSF CHAIRMAN NGUYEN GIA HIEN LOSING IN BIEN HOA PROVINCE. CATHOLIC POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THESE RESULTS. OUR BREAKDOWN OF THE RELIGION OF NEW DEPUTIES WHERE KNOWN SHOWS 49 TO BE BUDDHISTS AND 21 CATHOLICS, A RATIO LESS FAVORABLE FOR THE CATHOLICS THAN IN THE OLD HOUSE (ABOUT 65/35) ALTHOUGH CATHOLICS WILL STILL BE PROPORTIONATELY MORE NUMEROUS THAN IN THE POPULATION AT LARGE (10 PERCENT).

6. OTHER PRO-GOVERNMENT PARTIES ALSO FARED POORLY. THE REVOLUTIONARY DIA VIETS APPARENTLY WON ONLY ABOUT 5 SEATS AND THE VU HONG KHANH VNQDD ONE. BOTH WERE VICTIMS OF THE AN QUANG SURGE IN MR I, WHERE THESE TWO PARTIES ALSO HAVE THEIR GREATEST STRENGTH. THE GENERALLY PRO-GOVERNMENT HOA HAO FACTION OF LUONG TRONG TUONG WON NINE SEATS, COMPARED

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TO THE EIGHT THEY HAD IN THE PREVIOUS LOWER HOUSE. (THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT HINH FACTION TOOK ABOUT THREE.) SINCE PARTY AFFILIATIONS ARE OFTEN NOT WIDELY KNOWN AND SOMETIMES DELIVERATELY KEPT SECRET, ADDITIONAL MEMBERS OF PRO-GOVERNMENT PARTIES WILL PROBABLY EMERGE IN THE FUTURE.

7. AS FOR REGIONAL BREAKDOWN, ALMOST COMPLETE INFORMATION SHOWS 36 NORTHERNERS, 51 FROM CENTRAL VIET-NAM AND 64 FROM THE SOUTH. THUS THE MORE POLITICALLY AGGRESSIVE NORTH AND CENTRAL VIETNAMESE HAVE INCREASED THEIR DISPROPORTIONATE PRESENCE COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS HOUSE, WHERE SOUTHERNERS EQUALLED THOSE FROM NORTH AND CENTER COMBINED.

8. OF THE 119 INCUMBENTS RUNNING (FROM A HOUSE OF 133 MEMBERS), 41 WERE RE-ELECTED. A NUMBER OF INCUMBENTS SWITCHED CONSTITUENCIES, WHICH IS PERMITTED UNDER VIETNAMESE LAW. OPPOSITION INCUMBENT WINNERS TOTALED 21, AND PRO-GOVERNMENT FIGURES 20, WHICH MEANS OPPOSITION DEPUTIES WERE IN GENERAL MUCH MORE SUCCESSFUL IN VIEW OF THE SMALL NUMBER OF OPPOSITIONISTS IN THE PREVIOUS HOUSE (ABOUT 35). THE OPPOSITION SOCIETY BLOC DID WELL, LOSING ONLY 5 OF ITS 18 MEMBERS AND EVEN SOME OF THOSE 5 LOST IN ELECTIONS OF DOUBTFUL HONESTY. THE PRO-GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP WAS DECIMATED AS 17 OF THE 23 PRO-EXECUTIVE LOWER HOUSE OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN WILL NOT RETURN, ALTHOUGH LH CHAIRMAN NGUYEN BA LUONG WAS REELECTED IN PHUOC LONG.

9. IN THE LAST LOWER HOUSE BECAUSE OF THE FRAGMENTATION OF VIETNAMESE POLITICS AND THE LARGE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES, OVER HALF THE MEMBERS WERE ELECTED WITH 20 PERCENT OR LESS OF THE VOTE IN THEIR CONSTITUENCIES. THIS WAS ESPECIALLY MARKED IN SAIGON AND GIA DINH, WHERE MOST WON WITH 10 PERCENT OR LESS. THE SITUATION WAS MARKEDLY DIFFERENT IN SAIGON THIS TIME, WITH BIG MINH'S VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, HO VAN MINH, GOING FROM 11 PERCENT TO 30 PERCENT TO TOP OF SAIGON WINNERS, AND NO WINNER RECEIVING LESS THAN 12 PERCENT. IN THE REMAINDER OF THE COUNTRY PATTERNS SHOWED NO PARTICULAR CHANGES FROM 1967 IN PERCENTAGES ACHIEVED BY WINNING CANDIDATES, EXCEPT FOR BA XUYEN, BAC LIEU AND VINH BINH PROVINCES IN THE DELTA WHICH ELECTED SOLID SLATES OF PRO-GOVERNMENT CANDIDATES BY SUSPICIOUSLY HIGH PERCENTAGES RANGING FROM 36 TO 54 PERCENT OF VOTES CAST.

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10. WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY (REFS A, C AND D) REPORTED ALLEGATIONS, PROBABLY LARGELY TRUE, THAT THE ELEC[illegible]NS WERE RATHER BLATANTLY RIGGED IN VINH BINH AND BAC LIEU. FO[illegible]OWING UPON THE INTERVENTION OF DEPUTY NGO CONG DUC TO "RESCUE" DEPUTY NGUYEN VAN THANH REPORTED REF D, POLICE AGAIN ARRESTED THANH AT DUC'S HOUSE. WE UNDERDSTAND HIS CASE AND OTHERS RELATED TO THE ALLEGED RIGGING IN VINH BINH WERE TO BE HEARD SEPT 3. RE BAC LIEU, LEFTIST LAWYER TRAN NGOC LIENG VISITED THE PROVINCE TO IVESTIGATE RIGGING AND RETURNED SEPT 1 CHARGING THAT HE HAD BEEN THREATENED BY AGENTS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT. WE UNDERSTAND BOTH DUC AND DEFEATED DEPUTY DUONG VAN BA IN BAC LIEU INTEND TO MAKE FULL USE OF COMPLAINT AND APPEAL PRECEDURES. THE THERAVADA BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION (THE ETHNIC CAMBODIAN FACTION THAT DEMONSTRATED FOR ETHNIC MINORITY STATUS IN 1969-70) IS VERY ANGRY OVER THE FAILURE OF ITS CANDIDATES IN VINH BINH AND BAC LIEU, WHERE THEY WERE ALLIED WITH DUC AND BA AND WERE PROBABLY ALSO THE VICTIMS OF RIGGING. THIS FACTION HAD ALREADY BEEN THREATENING DEMONSTRATIONS TO BACK ITS DEMANDS FOR OFFICIAL ETHNIC MINORITY STATUS, AND THE ELECTION RESULTS HAVE ADDED ANOTHER GRIEVANCE.

11. THE SAIGON PRESS IS HAILING THE COURAGE OF THE PROSECUTOR IN PHUOC TUY PROVINCE WHO HAS JAILED 6 POLLING OFFICIALS OVER RIGGING CHARGES THERE. OPPOSITIONIST HUYNH VAN NGUYEN WON BY 268 VOTES ON THE INITIAL COUNT, BUT THEN UNEXPLAINED CHANGES IN THE VOTES FROM ISOLATED DUC THANH DISTRICT PUT LT. COL. VU VAN QUY AHEAD BY 25 VOTES IN THE RESULTS AS REPORTED TO SAIGON. (AMERICAN SOURCES CONFIRM THE ALLEGED RIGGING DID OCCUR.)

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12. THE RACE IN PHUOC LONG PROVINCE, WHERE ADMINISTRATION FAVORITE AND CURRENT CHAIRMAN OF THE LOWER HOUSE NGUYEN BA LUONG WAS RE-ELECTED, RESULTED IN AN ATTEMPT AT SELF-IMMOLATION (PERHAPS INTENTIONALLY ABORTIVE) SEP 1 IN FRONT OF THE LOWER HOUSE BUILDING IN SAIGON BY DEFEATED INCUMBENT DEPUTY NGUYEN DAC DAN, A KY SUPPORTER. IN TUYEN DUC OPPOSITION CANDIDATES HAVE FILED PROTESTS AGAINST SOME MASS VOTING BY ARVN AND THE TRANSFER OF BALLOT BOXES BY HELICOPTER WITHOUT CANDIDATES' OBSERVERS ABOARD. IN QUI NHON COMPLAINTS ARE BEING FILED OVER THE DISCOVERY OF SOME DUPLICATE VOTING CARDS. AMERICAN OBSERVERS HAVE NOTED THAT IN DINH TUONG PROVINCE THE THIRD WINNER OWED HIS VICTORY TO A SUSPICIOUS MASSIVE VOTE IN CAI LAY DISTRICT, WHICH WENT VERY HEAVILY FOR ALL THREE GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED CANDIDATES. (THEY ALL WON.) PRESS ACCOUNTS INDICATE COMPLAINTS ARE ALSO BEING FILED IN SEVERAL OTHER PROVINCES, AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED.

13. TO THE EXTENT THE POPULAR REACTIONS CAN BE GAUGED, THE ATTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE TOWARD THE ELECTION WAS PROBABLY LARGELY ONE OF APATHY. VOTING IS CARRIED OUT THERE AS A DUTY, IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES

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WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS. CONSEQUENTLY THE HIGH VOTER TURNOUT (78.5 PERCENT OF REGISTERED VOTERS BY PRELIMINARY FIGURES) PROBABLY REFLECTS MAINLY AN EFFORT BY LOCAL OFFICIALS TO GET OUT THE VOTE ALTHOUGH THERE WAS CERTAINLY SOME INTEREST IN A NATIONAL ELECTION WHICH IS CARRIED OUT AT A LEVEL LOW ENOUGH TO TOUCH THE PEOPLE DIRECTLY, PARTICULARLY IN PROVINCES WHERE STRONG OPPOSITIONISTS WERE CANDIDATES. THERE IS MORE POLITICAL AWARENESS AND INTEREST IN THE CITIES, ALTHOUGH IT STILL PROBABLY TOUCHES ONLY A MINORITY OF THE URBAN POPULATION. HOWEVER, THE GREAT TURNOVER IN THE NUMBER OF DEPUTIES IS ENCOURAGING AS AN INDICATION THAT THE PEOPLE ARE IN FACT EXERCISING THEIR FRANCHISE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THEIR REPRESENTATIVES, AND PERHAPS THIS FAILURE OF INCUMBENTS TO WIN RE-ELECTION WILL HAVE A SALUTARY EFFECT ON THE NEW DEPUTIES.

14. IT IS ALSO ENCOURAGING TO NOTE THAT BIG SPENDERS DID NOT FARE ESPECIALLY WELL. OF THE THREE EXAMPLES OF LAVISH SPENDING MENTIONED IN REF B, BOTH LE VAN KHA IN QUI NHON AND NGUYEN VAN LE IN GO CONG WERE DEFEATED, ALTHOUGH MRS. NGUYEN THI HAI IN LONG AN WAS SUCCESSFUL.

15. SINCE THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTION RESULTS WERE SOMEWHAT SKEWED TOWARD THE PRO-GOVERNMENT SIDE BY GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN SOME CASES, THE RESULTS INDICATE THAT THE PRESENT NATIONAL LEADERSHIP HAS NOT SUCCEEDED IN BROADENING ITS BASE OF POPULAR SUPPORT. PRIOR TO THE ELECTION THERE WAS SOME TALK AMONG OPPOSITION CANDIDATES ABOUT MASS WITHDRAWALS, AND IN AN QUANG CIRCLES ABOUT BOYCOTTING THE ELECTIONS. THESE THREATS DID NOT MATERIALIZE, AND THE ELECTION TOOK PLACE IN A GENERALLY ORDERLY MANNER, WITH NO SIGNIFICANT DEMONSTRATIONS AND GOOD TURNOUT. THUS THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS DID NOT INTRODUCE ANY NEW ELEMENTS INTO THE POLITICAL SITUATION WHICH MIGHT HAVE INDUCED PRESIDENT THIEU TO ALTER HIS PLANS FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

16. WHILE THERE CERTAINLY WERE IMPERFECTIONS IN ITS SELECTION, THE NEW LOWER HOUSE IS A FAIRLY ACCURATE REFLECTION OF THE VISIBLE POLITICAL TENDENCIES IN THE COUNTRY, WITH SOME BIAS TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT SIDE. THE PROCESS DOES INDICATE AN INCREASING DEGREE OF DEMOCRATIC ACTIVITY AND GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF STRONGER POLITICAL PARTIES. THE ELECTION ALSO COULD SERVE AS A SLIGHT STEADYING INFLUENCE AS VIET-NAM TRIES TO

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WORK ITS WAY THROUGH THE CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS SURROUNDING THE OCT 3 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.
BUNKER

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